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Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

October 23, 2008

The Honorable Kevin Martin, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Martin:

I received some disturbing news that could dramatically alter the cost and availability of rural telecommunications and broadband in my state of North Carolina. It is my understanding that the Federal Communications Commission vote is scheduled for November 4 – Election Day 2008. I am disappointed the FCC Vote is scheduled on this day when members of Congress and their constituents are rightly focused on their civic duties.

In addition to other issues, the proposal apparently includes consumer phone rate increases ranging from several dollars to almost \$10 a month, just to save urban-focused telecom providers nearly \$4 billion annually in access charges. This is somewhat alarming given the challenges that many of my colleagues already face from a national credit crisis, increasing food and fuel prices and rising unemployment rates.

At the same time, the proposal would undercut broadband investment by eliminating billions of dollars in funding that rural providers use today to build and maintain broadband infrastructure in rural America in addition to putting the goal of universal broadband availability further away for many communities, such an approach could lead to additional unemployment and market instability in the telecommunications industry.

Our community still lacks broadband availability to many individuals, due to its rural nature.

I would like to urge you in the strongest possible terms not to proceed with these issues in the proposed order before putting it out for public comment. This will educate us all on the merits and drawbacks of the proposal before it's too late.

Sincerely,

Penny Leary-Smith
Director

cc: Commissioner Debra Tate
Commissioner Robert McDowell
Commissioner Michael Copps
Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein

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